



State of Montana
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

Travel Policy

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DNRC recognizes that travel is a necessary operation of state government. Only travel, which will benefit the state of Montana, will be allowed. Transportation shall be the most economical in terms of direct cost to the state and the employee's time away from the office. Trips shall be scheduled to avoid unnecessary backtracking and overlapping.

I. Travel Advance-Temporary

An employee who travels infrequently may obtain a travel advance for any trip that is expected to exceed \$50.00 in employee out-of-pocket expenses. Temporary advances may be issued up to 100% of the expected travel expenses.

To request a temporary travel advance, the employee must submit an approved in state or out of-state travel advance request form to the payroll office prior to the end of the payroll period, for the payday immediately prior to the date that it is needed.

No additional advances will be made to an employee with prior outstanding advances unless a travel expense voucher satisfying the outstanding amount accompanies the new request.

If the travel is not performed as planned, the payroll office needs to be notified in writing immediately, unless the trip has been delayed less than 30 days. The advance will then be deducted from the next paycheck. If there is no more pay due the employee then they will need to submit a personal check or money order.

II. Travel Expense Voucher

To claim reimbursement for travel expenses, a travel expense voucher must be completed and submitted to the payroll office. Attached is a sample form.

The travel expense voucher must be signed by the employee and the supervisor and should be filed monthly. Pursuant to State Policy, if you do not file a claim for travel costs within three months after incurring the expense, you waive your right to reimbursement. Make sure you list your employee ID # at the top of the travel expense form.

Employees who live in town-different from their work headquarters, see DNRC Travel Status Guidelines.

If you attend a meeting or conference attach a copy of the registration information to your travel request.

III. Transportation-State Motor Pool

Employees are encouraged to use state-owned vehicles whenever traveling for state business. Personal or private use of motor pool vehicles is prohibited.

Requests for vehicles must be submitted on a Vehicle Requisition and Trip Ticket form that is available in your office or from the state motor pool office. An employee who is authorized to sign must sign requests. The list of authorized signatures is available in the payroll office.

Check out and check in procedures can be obtained at the state motor pool office. Also at the time of check in-a rule packet is given. An employee can also obtain a copy of the Vehicle Use Policy at Risk Management's web site.

Rental rates for motor pool vehicles are available from the Department of Transportation, Maintenance Division.

IV. Transportation-Personal Vehicle

Reimbursement at Standard Rate:

Use of the employee's personal vehicle in lieu of state motor pool must be authorized by the director or designated authority.

Reimbursement will be at the standard rate.

Reimbursement at High Rate:

Employees will be reimbursed at the high rate only when a motor pool vehicle is unavailable or when the employee drives 25 miles or less in any calendar day. (Usually an employee is reimbursed at the high rate for work-related errands within 25 miles of the work place). The higher rate is paid only on the first 1,000 miles each month. The lower standard rate is paid for miles in excess of 1,000. If a motor pool car is not available the motor pool will give the employee a memo stating that car was not available. At the agency discretion, personal vehicle use may be authorized and you must be reimbursed at the high rate. Agency approval must be noted on the memo and this must be attached to the travel claim.

V. Transportation-Air Travel

All commercial air travel shall be by the least expensive service available.

The transportation purchase order form and process have been eliminated.

The Department of Administration requires agencies to use the State's purchasing card to purchase all airline tickets for individual employee travel.

Agencies are required to use the State's purchasing card to purchase all airline tickets for individual **employee** travel unless it can be documented that another payment method is in the state's best interest. This applies to ticket purchases made through a travel agent, purchased directly from an airline, or purchased from an online travel source. Additional information is available at the department's air travel web site.

Reimbursement for employee's private aircraft usage must be approved by the appropriate division administrator. Please refer to the department's policy on private plane use.

VI. Meals

To be eligible for meal reimbursement while traveling on state business, the employee must have been in a travel status for more than three continuous hours in a meal time range and be a distance of at least 15 miles from headquarters or home, whichever is closer.

Only one of the three allowances is provided if the travel is performed within the employee's "travel shift." "Travel shift" is one hour before and one hour after the employee's actual work schedule. Employees with work schedules that vary from the normal 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. must show their work schedule on the travel expense voucher. If no alternate schedule is shown, payroll will use the 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. schedule.

If your position involves travel from headquarters or home to a work site(s) within your work area and you travel and return within an eight-hour shift, you are not in a travel status and should not claim a meal allowance. You should consider the work site(s) to be your "headquarters" for that day. If your travel exceeds an eight-hour shift, you are considered to be in a travel status, and you may claim a meal allowance if other applicable requirements are met.

Meals are reimbursed according to the following time ranges:

Time Range:

12:01 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Morning meal

10:01 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Midday meal

3:01 p.m. to midnight Evening meal

Each time range must be considered separately when applying the more than 3-hour rule.

See this web page for meal reimbursement rates.

Employees are not eligible for reimbursement of meals that are provided as part of the conference, camp, business lunches, etc. If an employee elects not to partake in the provided meal the state will not reimburse for an alternate meal.

According to the Department of Revenue, meal reimbursements for travel that is not overnight is taxable. Taxes for non-overnight meals will be withheld during the pay period that the travel expense voucher is processed through payroll.

When working for other state or federal agencies on wildland fires or other such incidents where lodging and/or meals are not provided, employees of the state of Montana (including Emergency Firefighters) will be eligible only for Montana per diem reimbursement rates for lodging and/or meal (in-state or out-of-state rates according to location of work performed).

VII. Lodging

A. Receptable Lodging:

Employees will be reimbursed for actual out-of-pocket lodging expenses, including room tax, up to the in state and out-of-state limits as outlined on the attached fact sheet.

Some cities and towns are considered to be "high cost." The lodging costs for these places are typically

higher than other places. This lodging will be paid at the federal lodging rate. Refer to the Department of Administration's web page for the Montana Instate Lodging Policy.

The agency director or designated approving authority may approve reimbursement of lodging at actual cost, without applying the cap under the following circumstances:

Lodging costs below the caps provided are temporarily unavailable due to special functions such as fairs, sporting events, conventions or seasonal demand.

Emergency travel arrangements preclude being able to find accommodations below the caps provided.

Remote locations with limited accommodations within a 5-mile radius preclude obtaining accommodations below the caps provided.

You are employed in a regulatory or undercover function and have reasonable cause to believe there is risk to your personal safety. This approval # must be attached to the travel claim when it is submitted.

A copy of the signed Request for Reimbursement form must be attached to the Travel Expense Voucher.

The original copy of the lodging facility receipt must be attached to the travel expense voucher for reimbursement. Other receipts, such as credit card receipts will not be accepted.

Lodging will be reimbursed for the employee only. If the employee is traveling with his/her non-state employee partner, the lodging rate claimed must reflect only the rate for one person. Failure to provide receipts for lodging will result in reimbursement at the non-receiptable lodging rate.

The employee will not be reimbursed for separate room facility costs.

B. Non-Receiptable Lodging:

The current reimbursement rate for an employee who stays in a non-receiptable facility (i.e. friends, relatives, camper, etc.) is indicated on the attached fact sheet.

If an employee fails to provide an original receipt from a lodging facility, reimbursement will be at the non-receiptable rate.

C. Provided Lodging:

In some instances, lodging is provided to the employee but no charge is assessed directly. In these instances, the employee cannot claim lodging expenses.

Examples of provided lodging are:

Lodging is included in the registration fee.

Government owned lodging, such as bunkhouses, cabins, lookout towers, fire camps, campers, tents, trailers, etc.

Seminars where lodging is provided on campus.

Firefighters are considered to have lodging provided when staying in fire camps.

XIII. Miscellaneous Expenses

Employees may be reimbursed for other travel related expenses such as parking fees, taxi fares, business telephone calls and working supplies purchased on an emergency basis.

Individual expense items of \$25.00 or more must be supported by original receipts. All miscellaneous expenses submitted for reimbursement must be explained in the space provided on the travel expense voucher. For office related phone calls, highlight the calls on the phone bill and attach it to the travel expense voucher.

Parking tickets, moving violation expenses, tips, or taxes on meals aren't reimbursable expenses.

IX. Out of Country Travel

Out of country travel expenses are reimbursed at United States Department of State maximum travel per diem allowances for foreign areas when receipts are provided with the travel expense voucher. These rates can be found at the following website.

X. Procurement Card Program

The department uses Pro Card and the procedures to obtain are set by the Purchasing Bureau of the Centralized Services Division. Contact Jeff Williams (6724) to obtain a Pro Card.

TRAVEL TIPS

Please send your travel voucher expense to Payroll. Carol Loomis, 1-406-444-2079; Tammy Berkas 444-6743.

Please make sure your supervisor signs them.

Please, only one month of travel activity on a travel expense voucher. It gets very confusing to try and sort out multiple months on one voucher.

Submit your travel vouchers on a monthly basis. Pursuant to state policy, you have three months after the travel was conducted to submit travel expense vouchers for payment. *If you do not submit your reimbursement for travel costs within three months after incurring the expense, you waive your right to reimbursement.*

For those who have outstanding temporary advances, please apply that advance on the next travel expense voucher after you complete your travel.

Lodging Reimbursement:

Employees will not be reimbursed for separate room facility charges.

Receiptable:

Original motel receipt must be attached to travel claim.

Regular In-State:

The maximum lodging reimbursement rate for in-state travel is the actual cost of lodging, not to exceed the federal per diem rate plus the applicable taxes on the allowable rate. The federal per diem room rates for Montana are available through the Internet at the following web site.

Regular Out-of State:

Lodging reimbursement for out-of-state travel follows federal guidelines, as established in Section 2-18-501(2), MCA. The federal schedules are available in the Department of Administration or through the Internet.

Non-Receiptable--\$12.00.

A "**Request for Reimbursement of Lodging at Actual Cost**" form must be completed and approved prior to travel and attached to the claim for reimbursement at actual cost for lodging that exceeds the federal per diem rate.

For out-of-country travel contact your payroll specialist prior to travel.

Miscellaneous Expenses:

Original receipts must support individual items of \$25.00 or more.

Travel Advances:

Except in hardship cases, your travel advance will not be approved unless your out-of-pocket expenses exceed \$50.00

Pro Cards:

Pro Cards are available for travel purposes. They are obtained through DNRC's Procurement/Contracting Bureau. Contact Jeff Williams. Filing Claims:

You should file travel expense vouchers no more than twice monthly. Unusual circumstances may justify exceptions to this rule. **If you do not file for reimbursement of travel costs within three months after incurring the expense, you waive your right to reimbursement.**

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